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ACCOUNT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ABECEDARIAN SOCIETY

INSTITUTED FOR THE

RELIEF OF REDUCED SCHOOL-MASTERS,

AND THEIR DISTRESSED FAMILIES.

DUBLIN, *March 28th*, 1788.

IT is generally acknowledged that the education of youth, is a profession no less honourable in itself than important to society, and yet it is a melancholy truth, that gentlemen who dedicate their lives to that arduous undertaking, precluded as they are from active exertion in the more lucrative pursuits of fortune, become too frequently in declining age claimants on humanity; nor is it to be wondered at, that they seldom realize acquisitions for which their situation, and unremitting attention to literature, naturally create an indifference—to say nothing of the difficulties they are exposed to, in other respects, too obvious to need recital. Such considerations weighing with several of the principal teachers of this metropolis, they convened a number of masters for the purpose of forming a society upon the principles of Christian benevolence, which by uniting them together might not only perpetuate a good understanding and harmony among themselves, but also contribute to the honour and advancement of letters. The title of the *Abecedarian Society* having been adopted as consonant to the institution, a general ballot succeeded; a president and treasurer were elected, and a secretary appointed to note their proceedings; it was then unanimously resolved, instead

stead of devoting to the pleasures of the table any subscription which they might be inclined to promote, to apply it towards raising a fund for the relief of reduced teachers and their indigent families. The design is indisputably liberal, and if charity and benevolence be not merely ideal, cannot fail of public countenance and support.

With a small assistance from the public and the concurrence of their brethren, who are not deaf to humanity, or insensible of the precarious tenure of prosperity, the Abecedarian Society, on these principles, conceive hopes of a permanent establishment, and that they may be enabled to pursue their charitable purposes with effect.

The following resolutions, calculated for their future direction, which will more fully explain the purport and scope of this association, are now submitted to general inspection——

RESOLUTIONS of the ABECEDARIAN SOCIETY.

1st. That the society shall be conducted by four officers, viz. a President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Collector, who are always to be school-masters, as upon them must necessarily devolve the great labour and anxiety connected with the establishment and support of the institution.

2d. That the officers shall be assisted by a committee of sixteen; twelve of whom to be school-masters, the other four honorary members, and that this committee, in conjunction with the officers, shall have power to make by-laws; provided always, such by-laws coincide with the true intent and spirit of these constitutional regulations.

3d. That every 26th day of March, unless it should fall on Sunday, being the anniversary of the Society's institution, a general meeting shall be held, and the officers and committee for the ensuing year then elected: after which, it is intended, the members shall
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dine together at their own private expence ; not out of the fund of the Society.

4th. That every member shall pay, or cause to be paid one guinea at the time of admission, and, exclusive of the admission fine, half a guinea, the day of meeting, on, or next after the 26th day of March and 26th day of September respectively, being one guinea annual subscription to the use of the institution only ; in case of default after due notice in writing, signed by the president and issued by the secretary, the defaulter, on failure of payment by the 4th night of meeting, subsequent to such notice, shall forfeit all claims and privileges as a member of the society, not to be restored but by application to the next general meeting of the body, and fully discharging the arrears incurred.

5th. That the collector shall account with, and pay into the hands of the treasurer, every second night of meeting, whatever sum he may have collected from the day of settlement preceding.

6th. That the sum of ten guineas advanced at one time, or within the year, shall be considered as a composition for annual payments ; constitute the subscriber a member for life, and for ever afterwards entitle him or her to all the privileges and advantages of this Society.

7th. That every person applying for admission shall be recommended by at least two members, who shall signify in writing with their names subscribed, the candidate's name, character, and place of abode, to be delivered to the president and read to the society duly assembled ; the ballot to take place the meeting next but one succeeding—* one black bean to exclude.

8th. That no person shall be admitted of this body, unless as an honorary member, who, at the time of proposing, has not been an established teacher, in a respectable and independent situation, for three years or upwards.

* This part of the Law being thought too rigorous, has been since moderated.

9th. That

9th. That as the professional members are, from situation, most likely to be acquainted with the characters and pretensions of candidates for admission, the right of balloting (except for honorary members) shall be vested in them only.

10th. That no member or person whatever, claiming on the charitable fund, shall benefit thereby, till such claimant shall have contributed to the same, by personal or other subscription, for the space of three years, after the date of subscribing; unforeseen accidents and infirmity excepted.

11th. That the provision for distressed members shall be determined by the officers and committee, to be regulated according to the situation and character of the claimant, and the state of the fund, which must have the sanction of the body at their next general meeting. But in cases of manifest and urgent distress, fully proved to the said officers and committee, the day of general meeting being distant, they shall have power to grant immediate relief, not exceeding the sum of ten guineas to an individual: and if, from any unforeseen cause, different claimants should appear in competition, the preference shall be given to the oldest subscriber.

12th. That the widows and children of such teachers as have been subscribers the stated time, shall be entitled to a support from this society, to be determined by circumstances, as set forth in the 11th regulation. This provision to extend also to Mistresses of Boarding-schools, Tutresses and Governesses in private families, provided their names have been duly entered upon the Society's books and their subscriptions paid, for the term prescribed—and that such Mistresses, Tutresses and Governesses in private families, so qualified, shall have a right of voting by proxy, to be given in writing to a professional member only, for the particular occasion specified; no member to hold more than one proxy at a time.

FORM OF THE PROXY.

I hereby appoint A. B. School-master, my Proxy,
to vote for me and in my name, on the day of
 Given under my hand this
day of

Signed,

C. D.

13th. That distressed teachers, who, for satisfactory reasons, have not been subscribing members, shall nevertheless be considered, and receive a suitable appointment, provided their pretensions correspond with the true meaning and spirit of this institution, properly certified from their place of residence; their names having been previously registered in the society's books at the instance of two honorary members, who have been subscribers the stipulated term, and have not before recommended.

14th. That ushers or assistants paying one guinea, when their names shall be inserted in the society's books, without farther subscription, and producing proper certificates of their having discharged faithfully their respective duties for the space of five years, shall be entitled to the protection and assistance of this society, and in cases of need receive a suitable provision.

15th. That, to accommodate country as well as city members, the society shall hold their meetings on Saturdays and Thursdays alternately, at the Royal-Exchange, or elsewhere, as shall be found most eligible; all business to be transacted between the hours of seven and ten o'clock in the evening—nine members a quorum.

16th. That every thing respecting the government and funds of the society, not particularly specified or provided for in these regulations, shall be referred to the society at large, duly summoned for the purpose.

17th. No part of the fund of the society, or of the interest thence accruing, except what may be necessary
for

for the contingent expences, as hall-rent, fire, candles, paper, printing, and the like, shall be distributed or encroached upon, till it amount to the sum of One Thousand Pounds sterling, on the attainment of which a power is reserved, to apply the interest, or a part thereof, to the purpose of the institution; to the end that relief may not be too long with-held from the necessitous: and all surplus of interest, subscriptions, donations, or other sums raised by what means soever, shall be added to the said sum of One Thousand Pounds, and put out to the best advantage, till the same shall accumulate to the farther sum of One Thousand Pounds sterling, which said sum of Five Thousand Pounds shall form the capital stock of this society, producing at the present legal rate of interest, three hundred pounds per annum to the uses of the institution, never to be on any account diminished—and this, with the growing subscriptions and other contingencies, it is hoped, will answer the humane purposes of this association.

18th. That the money arising from subscriptions, or from whatever source accruing, shall be without delay laid out on the purchase of one or more government debentures, or other securities eligible to the society, which shall be deposited in an iron chest, to be lodged in one of the banks of this city; the cashier of the Bank to have one key, and three trustees annually chosen from the body severally to hold a different key of the same. No trustee or key-keeper to give his key or receive one from another, on penalty of expulsion.

19th. That no money shall be distributed by the treasurer, but by order of the society.

20th. That the president shall have a discretionary power to summon the society occasionally, and, in cases of emergency, to lay a fine, not exceeding half a crown, on each *professional* member *only*, for non-attendance.

SAMUEL WHYTE, President and Treasurer.
JOHN M'CREA, Secretary.

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THE Abecedarians, relying on the liberal character of the present age, and their own evident disinterestedness, entertain the most sanguine expectations that their design will meet general encouragement. It is an appeal to the humanity, good sense, candour and gratitude of a generous public, in behalf of men, who devote their lives to their service, and who, from the nature and universality of their labours, are entitled to attention and comfortable support. While the other liberal arts and professions are limited as to their objects, and circumscribed in their operations, education alone extends her fostering kindness to every individual, and embraces, without reserve, the whole community.—To that source the most conspicuous characters are greatly indebted for their superiority, and all our dearest interests and advantages in life bear testimony of its influence; not only our temporal, but even our eternal felicity, in a considerable degree, depends upon our education. Yet how small* are the rewards of merit in this department, compared with the benefits it dispenses. Would but a majority of those, who experience its happy effects, well consider this, and open their beneficent hands, how trifling a contribution from each would answer the ends proposed. Those who are already established in the profession, and enjoy the well-earned fruits of their industry, will not surely hesitate to throw in their mite; and young men of abilities, more recently engaged in the arduous task, reflecting upon the uncertainty of life and success, will naturally find comfort in the consideration of its being in their power, at a small annual expence, to lessen the miseries to which their

* The best School Education which can be procured seldom stands the parent altogether in fifty guineas, disbursed in a course of years by petty installments; for the most part scarcely a moiety of that sum; not an apprentice-fee to a common mechanic, and not one half of that, deducting the necessary and certain expences of rent, ushers, servants, repairs, &c. &c. remains to the teacher—what an inadequate consideration for a matter of such consequence!

wives and children may be exposed. The few who are enabled to bequeath wealth to those they leave behind them, will have an opportunity of testifying their gratitude to that profession in which it was acquired, by contributing to the relief of the families of their less fortunate brethren, and others not of the profession, who are benevolently disposed, considering what benefits they derived from it, will by means of this establishment, have it in their power to exercise their humanity by extending their bounty to those, who might not unreasonably have indulged better expectations.

If this institution had been founded upon the principles of a Society for *the benefit of survivors*, it could not have fully answered the proposed benevolent intentions; for then it must have had a termination, whereas it is meant to be perpetual: or, if it had been formed upon the general plan of *Annuity Companies*, the benefits might have fallen in many cases to widows and children not in want of assistance; and in others, relief could not have been proportioned to the degree of real distress, which is the peculiar object of this Society.

Should the plan be found defective in its construction, or unsuitable to the magnitude of its object, let that be no hindrance to the charity of the well-disposed. The promoters of it are not so wedded to any system as to shut their eyes to improvement. They have attempted only to lay a foundation, and will gladly adopt such measures as may render the superstructure more secure, complete, and permanent.

☞ *Since this Account of the Society's Proceedings went to press the LORD CHIEF BARON has honoured it with the sanction of his Approbation. His Lordship authorised the President to make use of his name, and to declare to the Public that he will most heartily concur with his brethren of the law to give it due countenance and support, as being unexceptionably a laudable and necessary institution.*



